



February 27, 2023  
Rob Baril, President  
District 1199NE  
Before the Finance Committee

***In Support of HB 5673 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY and SB 774 AN ACT ADJUSTING CERTAIN MARGINAL RATES FOR THE PERSONAL INCOME TAX AND ESTABLISHING A CAPITAL GAINS SURCHARGE***

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn and members of the Committee. My name is Rob Baril and I am President for District 1199 New England. Our union represents approximately 26,000 workers across Connecticut who deliver care in public and private healthcare settings. Of those members, we represent Nursing Home workers of all kinds, Home Care workers, and group home workers. We are also uniquely positioned to speak about the issues facing public sector direct care workers because our members provide care through state agencies like the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as public employees. Our members are working-class black, brown and white workers who continue to provide care with love, but are instead being treated as expendable workers. These caregivers work daily with our state's most vulnerable. They are nurses, certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, as well as dietary, housekeeping, recreation aides, personal care attendants, and direct care workers. They are the backbone of Connecticut's health care delivery system.

Like their clients, the majority of those who deliver these vital services are black and brown. Doubly disadvantaged by racial and class discrimination, they have been tasked with rectifying complex health problems that are exacerbated by these same forces. These workers have multiple full-time jobs, and they provide services by holding multiple low wage jobs because of their low wages. The pay is so low they cannot afford to stay home. They cannot deliver care through a computer. There are no telecommuting options for them. We must be proactive and prepared to protect workers and the people they care for every day.

Reducing services is not merely a form of social neglect. It is discriminatory and counterproductive. Staffing shortages at nursing homes caused deaths of our members and deaths of residents. Many group home workers don't have affordable health insurance, and home care workers have no insurance unless they buy it themselves off the exchange for more than they can afford. In the public sector, budget reductions are making state run services harder to find despite the increasing need in the middle of an opioid and mental health crisis.

You can't solve these problems without investing more money in residents, caregivers and services. And the funding I'm talking about is a real investment. Expanding the safety net that we have is critical right now. As the wealthiest state in the country, we HAVE the resources. What we need is the courage to direct these resources towards expanding the services that our communities, our kids, and our families need. Our Equity Agenda - House Bill 5673 - along with Senate Bill 774 will allow us to transform our state and move towards a Connecticut where your life opportunities are not determined by your zip code. To do this, we need to have the courage to meet the moment.

And the moment is that there is a massive amount of suffering that we cannot ignore. Connecticut's extreme inequality has only gotten worse over the past year. Over the course of the pandemic, Connecticut's 12 billionaires added nearly \$15 billion more to their wealth. This happened while hundreds of thousands of residents lost their jobs. This is happening while 1 in 5 Connecticut adults with children are saying their kids don't have enough food to eat. While 41% of adults reported depression or anxiety during the pandemic. While thousands of families are in danger of eviction. We can't keep going down this failing path.

That's why our union is proud to support these bills, which would put our state on a path to a strong economic recovery for all residents. They will generate the revenue we need to fund essential long term care, mental health, and healthcare services. They will ensure that black, brown, and working class white people will have enough money to spend in their local communities and be the engine of our recovery.

In the biggest economic crisis in nearly a century, will our state government make the moral and economically sound decision to pass these bills? Or will it kick the can down the road, and ignore the suffering of the essential workers who have sacrificed the most to carry us through the pandemic?

We need to have the courage as a state and make a real investment in workers' lives. Our members do this work because they care about residents. They see their residents as family members. They want to make residents feel loved through small gestures and to provide comfort to those that are in hospice. They also want to be able to go home at night and not have to worry about how they are going to provide for their own families. They deserve to be able to do this.